75¢

VOL. 11 NO. 12
JULY 1981
ISSUE NO. 227

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

San Diego Trolley

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THE COVER STORY

In this issue we cover the opening of the San Diego Trolley, which took place in late July. The new operation is looked upon with great interest all over the U.S. and perhaps abroad. It was done without federal funding (but, of course, with the help of the most populous state in the Union), and began operation on time and without a hitch. The decision to purchase existing technology--German-built streetcars--and the fortunate accident that made the storm-damaged San Diego and Arizona Eastern Railway right-of-way available to the developers were two of the most important factors in the successful initiation of this new "Red Car" service.

Also in this issue, do not fail to read the article by Ted and Sylvia Blishak, which brings important information and raises difficult issues regarding Amtrak's current downgrading of dining car service on long distance trains.

★ COMPROMISE AMTRAK BUDGET COMPLETED

House-Senate conferees completed their work on the compromise Amtrak budget on July 28, and the final result was that Amtrak will be budgeted $735 million for Fiscal 82, the year that starts next Oct 1, and $788 million for Fiscal 83. The bill requires Amtrak to cover 50% of its costs thru passenger revenues and other income in the coming fiscal year; currently it covers about 41%. An $82 million interest payment due the government in the next fiscal year was deferred, thus giving Amtrak that much to use for capital expenditures, including the new low-level long distance cars now under construction by Budd. The Senate's position on state and local taxes was adopted, allowing Amtrak to save $6.5 million in the coming fiscal year, rather than a more liberal amount that was in the House version of the legislation.

Regarding route decisions, the existing route criteria are retained, but Amtrak is given the flexibility to modify routes that are performing poorly rather than discontinuing them. The specific route discontinuations given in the first versions of the Amtrak legislation were not written into the final bill. Amtrak will make the decisions on which routes must be discontinued or modified to meet its budget. The SHENANDOAH, CARDINAL, and the Houston and Laredo legs of the INTER-AMERICAN are still believed the most likely to be cut on Oct 1. However, Alan Boyd, Amtrak president, informed some California rail supporters that the SUNSET LIMITED would be eliminated. This tends to confirm rumors reported here last issue that the train is on the cutting block, and that in partial substitution for it a Los Angeles-Tucson day train would be started. The CRESCENT and NORTH STAR were also named in those rumors as possible eliminations.

The Amtrak bill as written requires Amtrak to reduce its dining car deficits by 50% the first year and to completely eliminate them in fiscal 1983. The bill also allows Amtrak to draw up contracts with private catering services as substitutes for its own personnel in dining and lounge cars.

The state share of 403-B subsidies is changed to 45% the first year and 65% the second year for new 403-B trains. Existing 403-B trains will continued under present regulations for the next two years.

The Amtrak Board of Directors is to consist of nine members: the DOT Secretary, FRA Administrator or DOT General Counsel; the president of Amtrak; two representatives of preferred stockholders; one railway labor representative; two representatives of each of the five regional transportation authorities served by Amtrak commuter trains; a governor or representative from a state interested in rail transport; and a representative from business interested in rail transport.

The bill provides $200 million for Northeast Corridor improvements, but does not include $15 that was in the Senate version for Washington Union Station improvements.

RAIL CANADA

VIA ROUTE CUTS outlined last issue could be made by the Cabinet without going thru the Canadian Transport Commission's public-hearing process, under a section of the Railway Act which has never been used before, according to reports. A Ministry of Transport official told inquirers that the plan to cut off a number of VIA routes and reduce service on others is now at quite an advanced stage. The cuts are expected to be attempted by the end of this year. There is, of course, intense opposition to any cutback plan by Transport 2000 Canada and by members of Parliament. VIA patronage has been increasing steadily since the corporation came into being in late 1978. Nearly all of the routes designated for discontinuation have already been the subjects of CTC hearings, and that body found that they deserve to remain in operation. Apparently the Cabinet can override CTC decisions, however. We repeat here the information given last issue regarding telegrams of protest (telegrams can be used while the Canadian postal strike continues): contact Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin, Minister of Transport, Tower C, Place de Ville, Ottawa, Ont. K1A ON5, with a copy to the Minister of External Affairs, Hon. Mark MacGuigan, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ont. K1A OG2. The National Association of Railroad Passengers, in addition to Transport 2000, has asked all rail supporters to join in the protest against Canadian passenger train cuts.

A WORLD'S FAIR with a transportation theme--to be known as Transpo 86--will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia from May 2 to Oct 13, 1986. Estimates are that 13 million people will visit the fair site, along the north shore of False Creek in downtown Vancouver. Transpo 86 is expected to accomplish "a worldwide exchange of ideas" on transportation as well as great fun in a "wonderland" of transportation technologies.

NEW VIA UNIFORMS have been designed by designer Michel Robichaud and will be introduced first for personnel on the LRC this fall, when the new trains are expected to go into revenue service. Over the next two years, the uniforms will be gradually introduced in other parts of the VIA system.

A HOT LINE to the president of VIA was inaugurated recently, and in the first week about 25 calls came in from each of the four VIA regions.

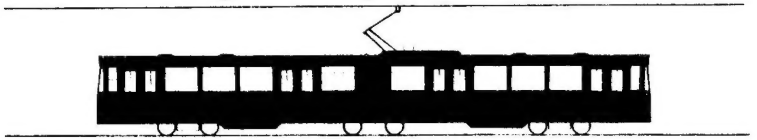
BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAY engine #808 was recently hauled out of the waters of Seton Lake near Lillooet, where it had been lying since Feb 29, 1980 when a railroad crash toppled it and diesel #711 off the rails. Ninety-eight feet under water, the diesel was pulled up laboriously by a special winch anchored in the rock walls of a mountain. Engine 711 will not be hauled out, as it was found to be wedged under a rock ledge. One railroad employee, a brakeman, was killed in the 1980 crash, which was caused by a rock slide.

TRANSPORT 2000 British Columbia is considering ideas for transportation policy regarding British Columbia Railway as well as national service. Some of the ideas that have been advanced include extension of the BCR line to Alaska; operation of an auto-carrier service; daily operation to Clinton rather than Lillooet; operation into the city center of Prince George rather than the outskirts. The city council of Prince George has asked the provincial government to study the feasibility of operating passenger service on the Tumbler Ridge line of BCR. That line serves a coal development.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAIL has formally told the federal government that it will build a new main line thru the Rogers Pass in British Columbia, involving two massive tunnels, provided the government changes its outmoded grain-carrying tariff, a rate that was set in 1895. The rail project would take four years to finish. One of the two costly tunnels would run under the Connaught Tunnel thru Mount MacDonald.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

San Diego Trolley—Opening Week



THE VEHICLES

Manufacturer	Siemens/DuWag (Dusseldorf, Germany).
Model	U2 light rail vehicle.
Type	Double-ended articulated car. 6-axle. Multiple-unit operation to 4 cars.
Fleet Size	14 cars.

VEHICLE SIZE & WEIGHT

Height	From rail to top of car . . . . . 10.76 ft. (3.28 m)
Width	Exterior. . . . . 8.69 ft. (2.65 m)
Length	End to End . . . . . 75.62 ft. (23.05 m) Over coupler faces . . . . . 79.66 ft. (24.28 m)
Weight	Empty. . . . . 71,870 lbs. (32,600 kg)

MATERIALS

Car Body	Light-weight welded steel. Articulation and operator cab portion covered by reinforced fiberglass.
Interior	Upholstered neoprene foam (fire-resistant) seats. Rubber flooring. Simulated wood paneling.

CHARACTERISTICS

Wheels	Steel-tired wheels with acoustic dampening.
Braking	Dynamic braking device and two-track brakes for each truck (wheel assembly) as well as disc brakes acting on four axles.
Ventilation	Dynamic air pressure allowing an exchange rate of not less than 20 times per hour. No cooling unit.
Speed	Average speed in Centre City (on city streets) . . . . . 9 mph (14.4 km/hr) Average speed on railway . . . . . 35-40 mph (56-64 km/hr) Maximum speed . . . . . 50 mph (80 km/hr)
Traction Power	Overhead power. 600 V DC.
Passenger Capacity	64 seats per car. Comfortable capacity for 124 standees per car. Up to 400 riders per 2-car train (crush load).

BOARDING FACILITIES

Doors	8 doors per car. Low-level boarding through any double folding door. Doors individually operated by a passenger push button after system is released by operator.
Safety System	Includes photo-electric cells and sensitive door leaf edges.
Wheelchair Lifts	Located at one end of each vehicle.

OPERATING PLAN

2-car trolley trains operating every 15 minutes for major portion of each day.

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS

Limits	From Santa Fe Depot area in downtown San Diego, via C Street/12th Avenue and San Diego and Arizona Eastern Railway to San Ysidro at the International Border with Mexico; total length = 15.9 miles (25.6 km).
Railway Right-of-Way	14.2 miles (22.9 km) used for trolley operation in joint use with freight service, at-grade, initially single track operation with passing tracks. Phase II now under construction to double track the line.

Centre City	In downtown area, trolleys at-grade, exclusive path within city streets, for 1.7 miles (2.7 km) double track. A portion of C Street ultimately planned as a transit pedestrian way.
Metropolitan Transit System	Trolley line will be one route in overall system, time-coordinated at transfer points.

OPERATING PLAN

Frequency	Peak Period and Midday ..... 15-minute headways
Freight Movements	Freight movements daily, no interference with trolley operations.
Trolley Vehicles	Electrically propelled articulated vehicles, wheelchair accessible in trains of two cars. Fleet of 14 Siemens/DuWag cars in stock. 10 additional vehicles now on order.
Average Speed	9 mph (14.5 km/hr) ..... Centre City 35-40 mph (56.3-64.4 km/hr) ..... Railway portion of right-of-way

ACCESS

Stops	C Street ..... 4 stops 12th Avenue ..... 3 stops Railway portion ..... 11 stops
Stations	Eleven standard stations along railway portion of route, low-level platforms with waiting shelters
Parking	2,100 parking spaces distributed among 6 of the 11 stops along railway portion of route
Fare Collection System	Self-service, barrier-free, ticket inspection by roving inspectors.
Security/Surveillance	Slow scan TV at stations

FINANCIAL & CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

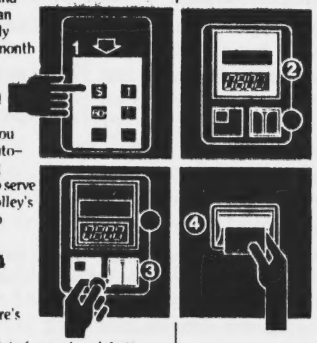
Costs	Total Phase I Project Development Cost (Including Interest Payback) ..... $86 million Total Includes Railway Right-of-Way (108 miles) ..... $18.1 million Vehicles ..... $11.4 million Phase II Project Cost ..... $19.8 million Additional Vehicle Cost ..... $9.5 million
Resources	MTDB's state gas tax set aside for guideway (rail transit) development .. 87.5% Transportation Development Act (TDA) monies (resulting from 1/4% state sales tax proceeds) 12.5%
Development	Period ..... 30 months Service Opening ..... July 26, 1981

TROLLEY OPERATIONS

Patronage	1995 Estimate ..... 28,000-30,000 daily trips
Bus-Trolley Coordination	Existing bus routes reorganized in South Bay Corridor to avoid duplication and to feed trolley system.

Three ways to ride

Traveling through San Diego and the South Bay is fast and easy with the new San Diego Trolley. Even faster and easier when you buy an economical $31 Ready Pass, good for a full month of unlimited bus and Trolley travel, or our Ready 10 ticket, good for 10 Trolley rides any time. But when you need a single fare, automated ticket vending machines are ready to serve you at each of the Trolley's 18 stops in San Diego and the South Bay.



Easy as 1-2-3-4

You'll find complete instructions on every vending machine. Here's how it works:

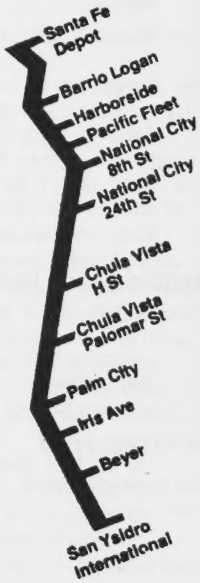
1. Select the appropriate fare and push button.
2. Read the amount indicated in the fare window.
3. Deposit fare shown. The machine accepts Susan B. Anthony dollars, half-dollars, quarters, dimes and nickels, but *does not* make change.
4. Take ticket and keep it with you. You may be asked to show it to a Fare Inspector.

Please remember

You can't pay your fare or buy passes on the Trolley so be sure to have your ticket or pass with you when you board. Fare Inspectors will circulate through the trains, and may ask you to present proof of payment. Passengers without valid tickets or passes will be issued citations that carry fines of up to $500.

Fares

$1.00 One way
.40 One way senior/handicapped
.25 Centre City (between Santa Fe Depot and 12th Ave.)
7.50 Ready 10 ten-ride ticket
31.00 Ready Pass monthly unlimited Trolley and bus rides
15.50 Ready Pass senior/handicapped
10.00 Ready Pass senior/handicapped City of San Diego residents only
.20 Transfer upgrade to Trolley from LOCAL buses (National City Transit and Chula Vista Transit) and URBAN buses (San Diego Transit non-Express)
FREE Transfer from Trolley to all buses (except with Centre City ticket)



For more information, 231-8549.

MTDB publicity photo shows passengers boarding a southbound train at one of the stops along C Street in downtown San Diego.

★ DEDICATING THE SAN DIEGO TROLLEY ★

by Peter Putnam Bretz

July 19 was a fun day in San Diego, for it was the official opening day of the San Diego Trolley--or the Tijuana Trolley, as it is popularly known.

Your reporter left Los Angeles for San Diego on Amtrak's 8:30am SAN DIEGAN, arriving San Diego at 11:18am, just three minutes late. With some colleagues, we wandered along the tracks that led from the Santa Fe station, up C Street to Third. There, the block in front of the Westgate Hotel was roped off with banners. Paper flowers decorated the small trees, and rows of chairs were set up in the hot sun next to a platform reserved for dignitaries.

We walked around a corner to a desk set up near the curb, got our press credentials and kits, and then joined a throng of VIPs standing on all sides of a smallish patio belonging to the hotel. People in the crowd sipped wine, ate little taco chips with cheese dip and hot sauce, and listened to a mariachi band composed of police officers from Mexico.

Around noon, everyone sauntered over to where the chairs were set up and took seats. Many invited guests simply stood on the curb (in the shade) and looked on. We sat in the designated press section, our Santa Fe baseball cap keeping out the sun.

Mayor Pete Wilson of San Diego acted as Master of Ceremonies, and introduced a large number of people from San Diego, Mexico and Germany, all of whom had had a hand in making "the Big Red Cars come back to Southern California." Caltrans's Adriana Gianturco accepted an award of thanks, and others took their bows.

At about 1:00pm we all dashed pell-mell for the trolley cars (interurbans, technically). All of us were warned not to rush the cars--just board the units with the colored dot in the windows that corresponds to the dot on your lapel cards. There were green, red, blue and black dots. We were directed to the second train to leave, this one reserved for the press and the black dots. The other colors had an 8-car train made up of four of the articulated units. It left at 1:15pm. Our second train had only two articulated units, and left at 1:23pm.

The cars are not air conditioned, so it was a little uncomfortable inside, even with the upper flap windows open (just like Trailways buses). But once underway, the cars cooled out quickly. There were a few standees. The trolleys did 1.7 miles of street running to begin, and moved at respectable speeds. Then, almost before we knew it, we passed the maintenance facility, joined SD&AE trackage and dug out. Top speed is 48mph, and the speedometers go only to 50mph. The one we saw was pinned at the 50 mark. The ride was smooth on welded rail. There was occasional lateral motion due to uneven track, but it was very minor. Our train whizzed along, passing right thru all the stations for a non-stop run to San Ysidro.

(Left:) Caltrans director Adriana Gianturco receives a "thank you" award from MTDB Chairperson Maureen O'Connor. (Right:) View from a train window as the trolley negotiates an S curve on San Diego streets. Peter Bretz photos.

We arrived at 1:50pm, just 28 minutes of excellent traveling. It's 15.9 miles from the Santa Fe station to the Mexican border. The set of cars we were in was unloaded immediately so a group of VIPs who came down on the first train could board and return to San Diego for more ceremonies. Meanwhile, the 4-unit train remained at the border until 2:45pm.

We repaired to a Jack in the Box fast food restaurant next to the tracks for some much-needed fortifications. In the meantime, up in San Diego, a second public ceremony took place. It involved a banner-breaking by the two-unit train just arriving from San Ysidro, more speeches, and the presentation by George Falcon of the Golden Spike Award to Mayor Pete Wilson. The Mayor wore a red tie with little streetcars on it.

During this time, we were boarding the 4-unit train at the border for the trip north. Everything went flawlessly, there were plenty of seats, and we could look out the "observation" section. Construction progress could be noted in various stages as we sped along. At the maintenance yards, some reporters, rail people and others got off. Then we proceeded down the middle of the street. We passed a set of equipment loaded with people taking free rides. It was packed and jammed. So was the next train we saw as we came to a stop back at Third and C Streets.

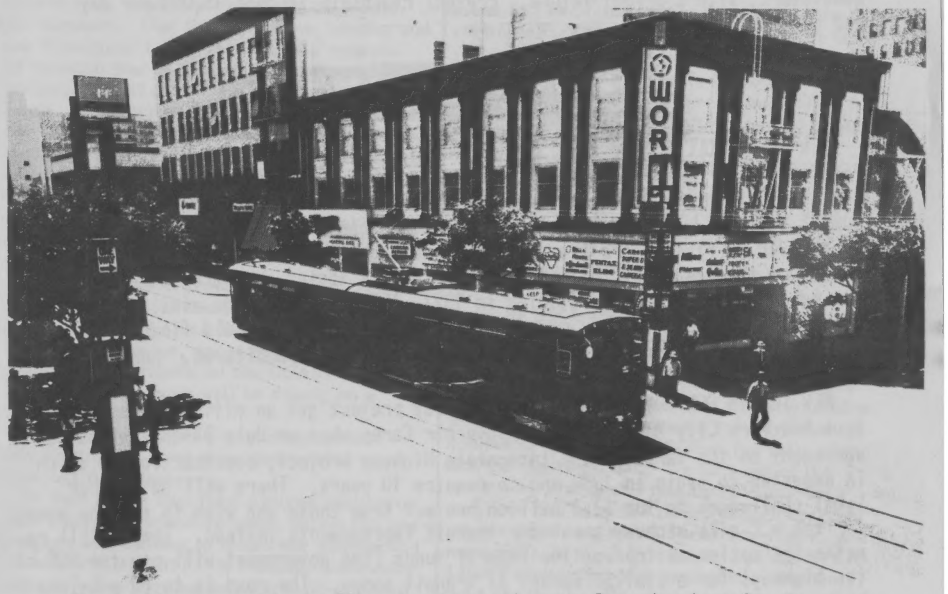
All comments heard were favorable, and we give the operation an "A+". It's just the thing to show, these days, that transit need not be complicated or sophisticated, nor cost lots of money nor be federally funded. We look for a high degree of success for the San Diego "Tijuana Trolley" operations.

★ THE RETURN OF THE RED CARS ★

by Walt Stringer

On July 26, after a week of VIP ceremonies, community displays, and "Try the Trolley Days", the San Diego Trolley became the first new streetcar (LRT in today's lingo) line in America in 40 years, and the first such service in San Diego since 1949. The Trolley is off to a good start, and public interest and ridership have been very high.

The Trolley runs on a 15.9-mile, single and double track line from downtown San Diego (Santa Fe/Amtrak Depot and C Street) to San Ysidro, a scant few hundred feet from the pedestrian customs entrance-exit to Mexico. Intermediate points are National City, Chula Vista, the Harborside area of San Diego, and portions of San Diego County below Chula Vista. Each of the 11 non-city stations has a shelter, at least one fare machine, and pay phones. Most stations have bus connection areas too. The seven San Diego city stops are traffic islands or extended curbs. The line will be entirely double track within one year.



The trolley pre-empts traffic signals as it runs along downtown San Diego streets. MTDB photo.

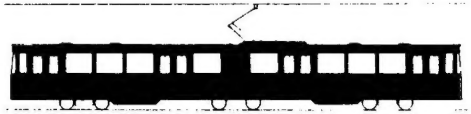
Service is provided from 5am to 9pm, with a 15-minute headway from 6am-8pm in both directions (the first and last hours are used to "set up" and "take down" the line). Between 9pm and 1am, a substitute shuttle bus runs half-hourly, as the Trolley will do after nighttime contractor work to complete double tracking is finished. Each train (there are five on line at any time) has two of the Siemens/DuWag U2 cars, seating 64 per car (crush load 200). As of this writing, weekday loads are comfortable, but weekend travel is heavy enough to cause standee situations, due to the Tijuana border trade. There are 14 cars total in the fleet, with 10 more due in 1982 to expand train size.

The fare structure is quite interesting. The San Diego MTDB decided to pull all the local transit operators together (San Diego Transit, National City Transit, Chula Vista Transit, Strand Streaker, and North County Transit, as well as Trolley), and riders can get anything from a monthly pass good on any line to a

single ride ticket. There is an E&M fare, as well as a 25¢ Downtown San Diego Trolley fare. Transfer privileges are reasonably liberal, both bus-trolley and trolley-bus. The basic Trolley fare is $1 one way (within 2 hours), or a local bus transfer plus 20¢ (except Strand Streaker). There is no interline fare with Amtrak, but Amtrak passengers have a brief one-block walk to board the Trolley.

While the California Transportation Commission has been most generous toward the South Line, there is no funding available yet for the proposed East Line, from San Diego to El Cajon (and possibly Santee) via Lemon Grove and La Mesa, via the MTDB-owned San Diego and Arizona Eastern right-of-way. Optimistic projections are for a 1985 opening, but nothing is certain. Other proposed extensions are still in early planning stages and are even farther off in the future.

Hopefully, you the reader will come to San Diego and ride the new Trolley. The cars are attractive and function well, and the ride is surprisingly interesting and varied. The general feeling is that San Diego Trolley is off to a good start, with a bright future. Present ridership is over 15,000 per day and growing.



NEW YORK TROLLEY: The same Siemens/DuWag trolley used in San Diego has been recommended for a proposed trolley line along New York City's 42nd Street. A new study financed by the Power Authority of the State of New York was made public in late July, and it called for a streetcar line along the busy street, from river to river. Traffic on 42nd Street now averages 5mph, but streetcars could run the length of the thoroughfare in only 18mins, compared to 45minutes now taken by buses. Other studies in 1977, 1979 and 1980 made similar recommendations. The present study proposed that private sources could finance the operation, which would require $35.6 million in capital expenditures. Annual operating costs were estimated at $2.8 million.

NEW YORK'S CONTROVERSIAL Westway highway project got an official endorsement from New York City Mayor Koch and Governor Carey when on July 31 they signed an agreement on the terms of the Interstate Highway project, construction on which is expected to begin in 1982 and to require 10 years. There will be further legal challenges to the $2.3 billion project from those who wish to see the money for the 4.2-mile highway spent for transit improvements instead. There still remains the option of trading the federal funds (the government will pay for 90% of the highway) for a similar amount of transit money. The road is to be a 6-lane highway, mostly underground, and built on landfill. It will run between the Battery and 42nd Street in Manhattan.

CHICAGO MAYOR BYRNE'S transit tax package, to provide $213 million per year for the city's transit facilities, was approved by the city council on July 20, to take effect Aug 1 (altho there will be court tests of the tax). The tax money comes from a sales tax, a cigarette tax, and a tax on professional services. A 13-member city transit commission was also approved. This body gives the city control over the transit authority.

DOT'S MASS TRANSIT budget for the next fiscal year was worked out by House-Senate conferees along with the Amtrak budget on July 28. $3.8 billion will go for mass transit aid, in line with the Administration's request, but $160 million less than the Senate wanted. It also gives $8.2 billion for highway construction and $600 million for airport construction and air traffic control. Funds for enforcement of the 55mph highway speed limit were cut back.

RIDING A SOLD-OUT SUPERLINER

by Ted and Sylvia Blishak

Until about a year ago, most of our travel agency customers preferred to fly when they traveled, but it wasn't unusual for airline seats to be sold out. If travelers were willing to go by train instead, Amtrak always had room. But by spring of 1981, the tables had turned. Many travelers now preferred Amtrak, but the Superliners were often sold out. This summer, even the limited-seating bargain airfares are readily available for the disappointed, would-be train rider.

Many travelers know, from first-hand experience, what it's like to fly on a sold-out airplane. Our flight between London and San Francisco two years ago was typical: 23 ticketed (but overbooked) passengers left behind, takeoff five hours late, narrow seats, overworked flight attendants, a dinner so tiny that many passengers asked for more food, serving carts blocking the aisles, an hour's wait for our luggage after landing. This was not a pleasant flight, but we had achieved our goal of covering a great distance quickly, so we took the discomfort and inconvenience in stride.

Relatively few travelers have experienced a sold-out train (a situation which was almost unheard of since World War II in this country.) However, most passengers lucky enough to get tickets on the COAST STARLIGHT this summer will be riding on a sold-out train.

We decided to spend our Independence Day finding out what it is like to ride on a sold-out Superliner.

At 9am at the San Jose Amtrak station on July 3 there is standing room only--115 passengers are waiting to board the southbound COAST STARLIGHT. A Cadillac limousine pulls into the parking lot; the well-dressed couple that emerges are typical of many passengers in the crowd. Amtrak is appealing to the higher-income traveler as well as the budget-minded families and senior citizens.

The station agent tells us, "The STARLIGHT is sold out today, in both coach and first class. We have a third sleeper added today, and an extra coach on the rear for some kids from the West Valley Swim Team who are going to Santa Barbara for a meet."

He confirms that business is up now that Superliners are here. "I sold $150,000 worth of tickets last month, but I had to turn lots of people away--this train is usually sold out."

"Does Amtrak overbook, like the airlines do?" we ask.

"We don't," he replies. "But sometimes people who try to make reservations don't believe us when we tell them the train is full. They get on board and hope to find a seat and buy a ticket from the conductor. If it's a standing-room-only situation, the conductor may charge them the fare to the next stop, plus a $3 service charge, and put them off at the next station!"

We tell him we've heard the STARLIGHT is usually on time these days.

"Well, he's going to be 15 or 20 minutes late today." (What do railroad employees mean by "he"--the train, the engine, the engineer?) "When the train is full like this, you can't get the people and luggage on and off quick enough to keep to the schedule. For example, the stop here is scheduled for five minutes, and we can't offload 80 people and load 115 that fast!"

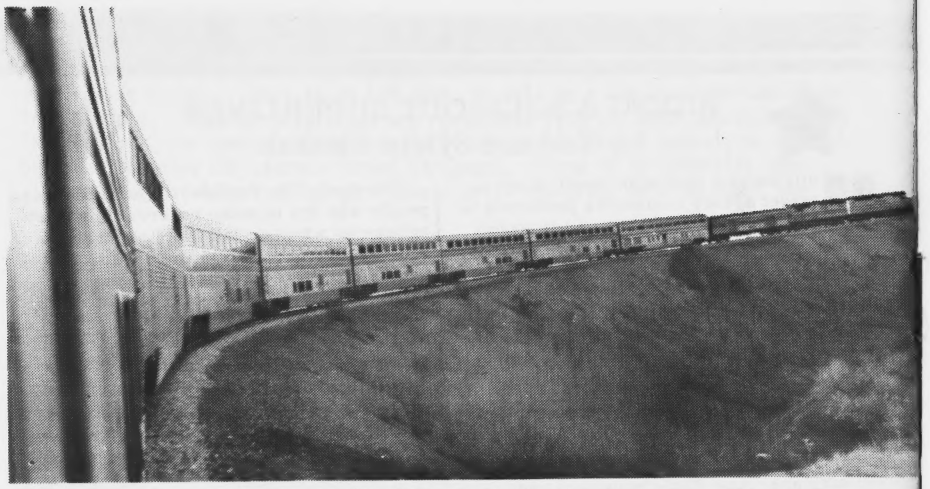
"Amtrak's Superliner COAST STARLIGHT is now arriving," he says over the public address system. "Passengers only aboard the train, please, as this will be a brief stop."

The STARLIGHT glides in, 19 minutes late, at 9:40am. We have obtained the last seats on the train--due to an eleventh hour cancellation--in car 1132, deluxe bedroom C. Since the former occupants of bedroom C have just detrained, our car stewardess puts us in economy bedroom #12 downstairs while she readies the room for daytime use. Suddenly, the air conditioner fan falls silent and the lights go out. We pull out of the station at 10am, and the lights come back on about five minutes later. Seven or eight minutes pass as the temperature rises, and memories of steamy rides on the old STARLIGHT equipment are awakened. Suddenly, cold air flows, and continues to keep our car at a chilly 68° for the rest of the trip. The PA system, however, is out of service for quite a while.

An elderly lady, who had ignored Amtrak's pleas that visitors not board the train, now realizes that we are underway and runs about in a panic. The conductor refuses to stop the train, and tells her she'll have to get off in Salinas.

A trainman passes in the hall with his transceiver on. We hear the engineer report that one of his diesels is low on oil, since somebody left the cap off after refueling.

The economy bedroom, with its two facing reclineable seats for day use, is comfortable. But when bedroom C is ready a few



The Superliner COAST STARLIGHT climbs the Cuesta Grade northbound from San Luis Obispo. RTN photo.

minutes later, we appreciate the sofa, large windows, and upstairs view from the deluxe accommodation. Soon we are speeding silently past the traffic on Highway 101, which seems to be standing still. We guess our speed is close to the 79mph limit.

We walk up thru the Cafe Lounge (which is crowded, with a line of passengers keeping the barman busy) and enter the dining car, where we ask if we can make advance reservations for lunch, but the reply is, "First come, first served!"

As the noon hour approaches, we wait in the small lobby area in the center upstairs portion of the sleeper nearest the dining room. It would be appropriate to have a couple of small chairs here, rather than the dirty linen which is stacked in the corner. The large paper trash bag in an alcove would look better enclosed in a more permanent container. We can see that the car steward is still hard at work making up his rooms.

At 11:40am we make an unscheduled stop while an official-sounding voice drifts up the stairwell, saying something about a hot-box detector.

At noon, we secure a seat in the dining car. RTN readers John and Margo Petros, of the Pacific Locomotive Society, recognize us and sit across the aisle. Underway again, we're now jostling over rough track south of King City. The tables are soon filled, and late-comers are given a waiting list number. (Since the PA system is out, these numbers are called out in the Cafe Lounge. First class diners give their room numbers, and the assistant Maitre d' fetches them as tables become available.)

Maitre d' Walter Young says that lunch will be served all afternoon in an effort to accommodate the entire trainload. "We used to serve lunch until 2"30, then an Early Bird Dinner at 4:00 on the southbound. But when the train is sold out, which it usually is, we just serve lunch straight thru."

What does Walter Young think about the airline-style food now being served on some trains?

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"What about your job?" we ask.

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"We had to wait for almost an hour," they say, "and then they forgot to call our number!" Hungry and somewhat impatient, they quickly order lunch and coffee. Lunch comes first, and they call after Mr. Starks demanding their coffee.

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Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg once had this to say about the food service on the TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED: "The dining car management of the Central felt that if its food took in fifty cents for every dollar it cost, the showing was highly creditable."* Even tho the dining car ran at a loss, the CENTURY itself was a profitable train. Second-rate dining service on the CENTURY would have turned away the New York Central's revenue-producing passengers. (All the expensive ads Amtrak is now running in the slick magazines are not going to make up for the bad press, and the word-of-mouth reputation that is already causing cancellations and losing them repeat business.)

A little more than 10 years ago, SP was managing to keep ridership on the COAST DAYLIGHT down merely by equipping it with an automat car and eliminating the diner. When Amtrak took over the route--with real dining car service--it quickly became (as the COAST STARLIGHT) the most heavily patronized train in the Amtrak system. Can this lesson have been so quickly forgotten? Have Amtrak's enemies, unsuccessful in railroading massive budget cuts thru Congress, insidiously placed the dining car profitability condition in the compromise budget because they know it will cause Amtrak to self-destruct?

We checked this theory out with an Amtrak executive, in an "off the record" interview. He assured us that budget-cutter Stockman of the Office of Management and Budget is the author of the dining car directive; and that Amtrak management is aware that this puts them in a very serious predicament. Our source outlined Stockman's plot for Amtrak: poor quality food and service will drive the first class passengers away, so the sleeping cars will soon be losing money too. Stockman will then arrange for the sleeping cars to be discontinued as unprofitable. What's left? Trains with no amenities--trains that people won't want to ride.

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By 4pm the PA system is working again. The Maitre d' comes on to announce that the dining car crew needs a half-hour break to "regroup"; as we leave Santa Barbara at 4:30, the last call for lunch is being made.

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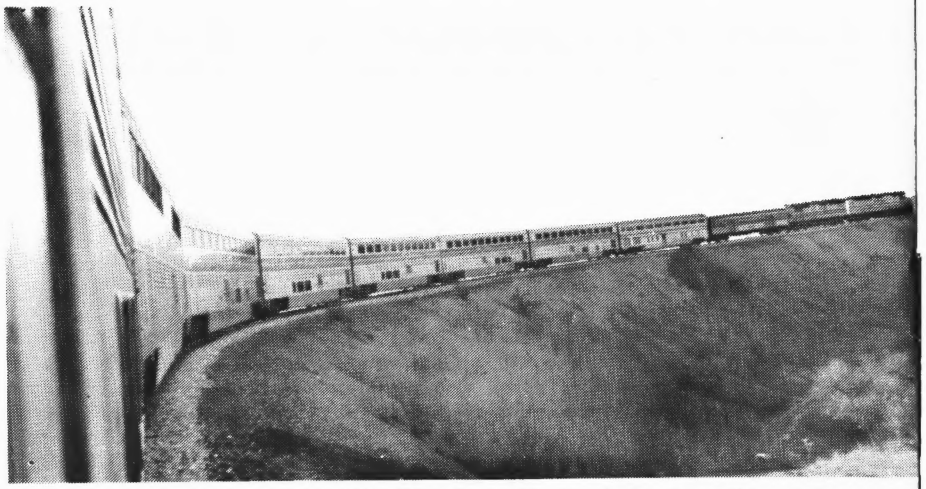

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and feel it has many advantages over car or plane travel. The average passenger seems puzzled about why the Reagan administration wants to discontinue rail service.

We detrain at Oxnard, where we spend the night at the Hilton Inn. (Why Oxnard, you ask? Because if you plan your holiday weekend at the last minute, you find that the hotels in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura have been sold out for weeks!)

* * *

OXNARD AMTRAK STATION, JULY 4:

This tiny station has only a dozen seats, but 24 riders are boarding here. Including families and friends, there are about 45 people inside and on the platform. Kids are wearing Amtrak engineer's caps. One young lady serves as receptionist, reservationist, luggage handler, and announcer. The sold-out northbound COAST STARLIGHT hustles in; we board and whistle off at 12:14, two minutes late. We're holding deluxe bedroom D today. Its connecting door to the adjacent bedroom is tied closed with string, and pieces of cardboard have been inserted between the lavatory wall and the bulkhead to quiet the rattles.

Passengers waitlisted for lunch are being paged over the PA system. We head for the Cafe Lounge. All seats are taken upstairs, and downstairs a dozen passengers are lined up at the snack-bar counter. We go on to the dining car, where the Maitre d' puts us on his waitlist, and offers to come get us in our compartment when our table is ready--and in a short time he does.

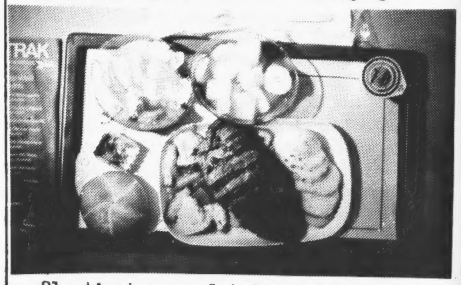
Just as we sit down for lunch, we make an unscheduled stop near Ventura, where beachgoers have parked their RV's along the edge of Highway 101. Our waitress, Gail Cannon, tells us that we are nose-to-nose with a freight, but she doesn't know why we've stopped. We're underway again 25minutes later with a borrowed SP diesel, pointed backwards, out in front of the Amtrak engines. We hear a loud report, and assume it is a firecracker. We realize later that the window on the other end of the dining car is broken. "Two boys with rocks", someone says. No armed Pinkerton men on horseback leap from an open baggage car door to chase the villains, as they did in "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." In fact, as far as we can tell, no steps are taken to apprehend the vandals!

As we pull into Santa Barbara station, with its huge old fig tree nearby, we notice that both Budget and Dollar rent-a-car have outlets right next to the station--the only one we know of with convenient car rental service.

Our luncheon tablemates, Jack and Chris Brereton of Hacienda Heights in Southern California, are first-time Amtrak patrons. They are finding it a relaxed way to travel, and enjoy the mobility and sociability of a train ride. Many people we talk to do not enjoy flying; others, using Amtrak's family plan, find the train more economical.

After lunch we find seats upstairs in the Cafe Lounge, where it is getting quite warm (about 80°) and only a dribble of air is coming out of the air conditioning vents. The barman complains about having to stand in the hot sun all day without sufficient air conditioning (how quickly we humans become spoiled--last year 95° on the STARLIGHT was nothing unusual!).

Passing the Oceano sand dunes and fields of artichokes, we turn inland where green vineyards flourish, while the heat-hazed Santa Lucia Mountains shimmer in the distance. At the San Luis Obispo station, we trade our backwards SP engine for a Cotton Belt engine heading forward. The conductor explains that one of the Amtrak engines has had relays cutting out, which limits the power to the traction motors. (The hotel power is supplied by the second diesel unit.) We leave San Luis at 4:08, 20 minutes late. Seats are available in the Cafe Lounge as we begin the Cuesta Grade climb; the temperature in the car is still rising, and cigarette smoke is hanging in the air. The conductor checks the car's switchboard and can't find anything wrong, but suspects it may be low on freon. It is certainly low on moving air!



Plastic-tray meal being introduced on some trains (steak dinner shown). Photo by Paul Rayton.

A man with a seeing-eye dog is sitting in the lounge car. He tells the steward that, in his dog's opinion, Santa Barbara and San Luis are too far apart--too long between rest stops.

We decide to hike the length of the very crowded train, and we notice for the first time that the seats in the baggage-coaches are different from the seats in the coaches. Coach seats have leg rests, and there are 68 seats on the upstairs level, compared to 84 seats upstairs (and no leg rests) in the baggage coaches.

The Santa Fe transition car is not in use; a locked gate separates it from the Superliner. It looks newly reburbished inside. While it is ordinarily used for overflow passengers (and was, on today's sold-out train, until Santa Barbara) the conductor explains that the air conditioner blowers failed and it became uninhabitable.

We leave Salinas 40minutes late. Early dinner is being served, and as we enter the dining car, we get a better look at the broken window. It is tinted safety glass outside; inside is a layer of Lexan, and the Lexan did not break. Such senseless vandalism is an unpleasant fact in today's world, but we wonder about the effect the administration's anti-Amtrak stand may have on the minds of people with rather marginal morality.

Fast running south of San Jose, as we go zipping past traffic, two automobile wrecks on 101, and a large brush fire in the hills to the east of the tracks.

A voice on the PA system asks the conductor to come to the Cafe Lounge. It seems that a male passenger became drunk and disorderly and nauseated. The conductor radioed the engineer to have the San Jose police meet the train, but later cancelled the call, as he located the man's wife, who took charge of him and took him back to their deluxe bedroom to sleep it off.

The conductor seems to be having to spread himself a bit thin; his job is to get the train from point A to point B, but since there is nobody on board in charge of security or repairs, he's trying to cope with all of it. It seems that it would be very appropriate for trains to carry a purser, or concierge--or someone who is in charge of the on-board staff and the passengers. When you have 400 people on a train, which is somewhat out of touch with the outside world as it moves along the tracks, incidents are likely to occur. It would be wise to have someone trained and ready to handle them.

A porter is telling some passengers in the hallway that 80 people will be getting off in Oakland and 150 getting on. He advises the passengers for Oakland to get their belongings together and get downstairs quickly when they hear the first call for Oakland, as the stop will be short with the train still behind schedule.

Each party waiting for dinner is given a waitlist number. Party no. 40 is being paged as we leave the train in San Jose. The dining car crew may have expensive salaries, but they certainly work hard to earn them!

* * *

No mode of transportation is at its best under sold-out conditions. While our account of this train ride may sound somewhat critical, our Superliner experience, on the whole, was an enjoyable one, while the flight on the sold-out jumbo jet was not.

Amtrak, this year, has achieved a higher standard of service, comfort and dependability than we ever expected to see. We've ridden both the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and the COAST STARLIGHT several times since they have had Superliner equipment, and have been elated at the improvement in Amtrak's product.

On this trip we saw Amtrak personnel working much harder than we like to see people work, yet they were being good sports about it. While future reservations indicate that the trains are sold out on many dates for the rest of the summer, Amtrak has no plans to increase on-board staff. Instead, there will be eventual reductions in the dining cars. It is not pleasant to realize that these highly-skilled people, with specialties that may not adapt easily to other industries, will soon be facing unemployment.

We are seriously concerned about Amtrak's future, because the decision has already been made, by the Reagan administration and by Congress, to force Amtrak to downgrade their product. Will rail travelers, who have chosen a long and leisurely mode of travel, be willing to cope with airline-type amenities, such as bare-minimum staff and microwave food? Why should they? If one is going to be treated like a number, one might as well take to the air and get it over with as quickly as possible!

As to our own personal travel over long-haul routes, such as Oakland to Chicago, we will choose air next time, unless Amtrak finds some way to improve the microwave food service. If enough potential Amtrak travelers take this position, the anti-Amtrak interests will then be able to say, "You see, the long-haul trains are unnecessary, just as we have been saying all along! Amtrak must be limited to short-haul corridors (if we must have Amtrak at all)."

We hope that Amtrak can find a way to maintain the high quality of their dining room service while staying within the guidelines Congress has now imposed. There must be other cost-effective alternatives to the food which, at this writing, our clients are saying is so objectionable. High-quality pre-cooked, microwave-heated meals are available, and have been used successfully in the first class cabins of many airlines. We have enjoyed such meals ourselves, and they are well-prepared, tasty, and are served on china and tablecloths, and eaten with silverware. If passengers are at least given the option of ordering a good meal (and many passengers would be willing to pay a substantial price for that privilege) then perhaps Amtrak will still have a product that is saleable to the long-haul passenger.

Many of our clients, accustomed to rapid air transportation, consider Amtrak, but waver when they learn that it will take them three days to cross the country. We have advised them that the trip consists of three well-prepared breakfasts, luncheS, cocktail hours, and dinners, with fresh flowers,

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OXNARD AMTRAK STATION, JULY 4:

This tiny station has only a dozen seats, but 24 riders are boarding here. Including families and friends, there are about 45 people inside and on the platform. Kids are wearing Amtrak engineer's caps. One young lady serves as receptionist, reservationist, luggage handler, and announcer. The sold-out northbound COAST STARLIGHT hustles in; we board and whistle off at 12:14, two minutes late. We're holding deluxe bedroom D today. Its connecting door to the adjacent bedroom is tied closed with string, and pieces of cardboard have been inserted between the lavatory wall and the bulkhead to quiet the rattles.

Passengers waitlisted for lunch are being paged over the PA system. We head for the Cafe Lounge. All seats are taken upstairs, and downstairs a dozen passengers are lined up at the snack-bar counter. We go on to the dining car, where the Maitre d' puts us on his waitlist, and offers to come get us in our compartment when our table is ready--and in a short time he does.

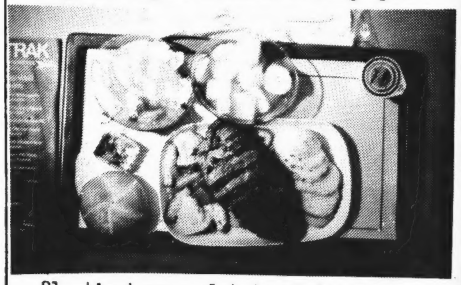
Just as we sit down for lunch, we make an unscheduled stop near Ventura, where beachgoers have parked their RV's along the edge of Highway 101. Our waitress, Gail Cannon, tells us that we are nose-to-nose with a freight, but she doesn't know why we've stopped. We're underway again 25minutes later with a borrowed SP diesel, pointed backwards, out in front of the Amtrak engines. We hear a loud report, and assume it is a firecracker. We realize later that the window on the other end of the dining car is broken. "Two boys with rocks", someone says. No armed Pinkerton men on horseback leap from an open baggage car door to chase the villains, as they did in "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." In fact, as far as we can tell, no steps are taken to apprehend the vandals!

As we pull into Santa Barbara station, with its huge old fig tree nearby, we notice that both Budget and Dollar rent-a-car have outlets right next to the station--the only one we know of with convenient car rental service.

Our luncheon tablemates, Jack and Chris Brereton of Hacienda Heights in Southern California, are first-time Amtrak patrons. They are finding it a relaxed way to travel, and enjoy the mobility and sociability of a train ride. Many people we talk to do not enjoy flying; others, using Amtrak's family plan, find the train more economical.

After lunch we find seats upstairs in the Cafe Lounge, where it is getting quite warm (about 80°) and only a dribble of air is coming out of the air conditioning vents. The barman complains about having to stand in the hot sun all day without sufficient air conditioning (how quickly we humans become spoiled--last year 95° on the STARLIGHT was nothing unusual!).

Passing the Oceano sand dunes and fields of artichokes, we turn inland where green vineyards flourish, while the heat-hazed Santa Lucia Mountains shimmer in the distance. At the San Luis Obispo station, we trade our backwards SP engine for a Cotton Belt engine heading forward. The conductor explains that one of the Amtrak engines has had relays cutting out, which limits the power to the traction motors. (The hotel power is supplied by the second diesel unit.) We leave San Luis at 4:08, 20 minutes late. Seats are available in the Cafe Lounge as we begin the Cuesta Grade climb; the temperature in the car is still rising, and cigarette smoke is hanging in the air. The conductor checks the car's switchboard and can't find anything wrong, but suspects it may be low on freon. It is certainly low on moving air!



Plastic-tray meal being introduced on some trains (steak dinner shown). Photo by Paul Rayton.

A man with a seeing-eye dog is sitting in the lounge car. He tells the steward that, in his dog's opinion, Santa Barbara and San Luis are too far apart--too long between rest stops.

We decide to hike the length of the very crowded train, and we notice for the first time that the seats in the baggage-coaches are different from the seats in the coaches. Coach seats have leg rests, and there are 68 seats on the upstairs level, compared to 84 seats upstairs (and no leg rests) in the baggage coaches.

The Santa Fe transition car is not in use; a locked gate separates it from the Superliner. It looks newly reburbished inside. While it is ordinarily used for overflow passengers (and was, on today's sold-out train, until Santa Barbara) the conductor explains that the air conditioner blowers failed and it became uninhabitable.

We leave Salinas 40minutes late. Early dinner is being served, and as we enter the dining car, we get a better look at the broken window. It is tinted safety glass outside; inside is a layer of Lexan, and the Lexan did not break. Such senseless vandalism is an unpleasant fact in today's world, but we wonder about the effect the administration's anti-Amtrak stand may have on the minds of people with rather marginal morality.

Fast running south of San Jose, as we go zipping past traffic, two automobile wrecks on 101, and a large brush fire in the hills to the east of the tracks.

A voice on the PA system asks the conductor to come to the Cafe Lounge. It seems that a male passenger became drunk and disorderly and nauseated. The conductor radioed the engineer to have the San Jose police meet the train, but later cancelled the call, as he located the man's wife, who took charge of him and took him back to their deluxe bedroom to sleep it off.

The conductor seems to be having to spread himself a bit thin; his job is to get the train from point A to point B, but since there is nobody on board in charge of security or repairs, he's trying to cope with all of it. It seems that it would be very appropriate for trains to carry a purser, or concierge--or someone who is in charge of the on-board staff and the passengers. When you have 400 people on a train, which is somewhat out of touch with the outside world as it moves along the tracks, incidents are likely to occur. It would be wise to have someone trained and ready to handle them.

A porter is telling some passengers in the hallway that 80 people will be getting off in Oakland and 150 getting on. He advises the passengers for Oakland to get their belongings together and get downstairs quickly when they hear the first call for Oakland, as the stop will be short with the train still behind schedule.

Each party waiting for dinner is given a waitlist number. Party no. 40 is being paged as we leave the train in San Jose. The dining car crew may have expensive salaries, but they certainly work hard to earn them!

* * *

No mode of transportation is at its best under sold-out conditions. While our account of this train ride may sound somewhat critical, our Superliner experience, on the whole, was an enjoyable one, while the flight on the sold-out jumbo jet was not.

Amtrak, this year, has achieved a higher standard of service, comfort and dependability than we ever expected to see. We've ridden both the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and the COAST STARLIGHT several times since they have had Superliner equipment, and have been elated at the improvement in Amtrak's product.

On this trip we saw Amtrak personnel working much harder than we like to see people work, yet they were being good sports about it. While future reservations indicate that the trains are sold out on many dates for the rest of the summer, Amtrak has no plans to increase on-board staff. Instead, there will be eventual reductions in the dining cars. It is not pleasant to realize that these highly-skilled people, with specialties that may not adapt easily to other industries, will soon be facing unemployment.

We are seriously concerned about Amtrak's future, because the decision has already been made, by the Reagan administration and by Congress, to force Amtrak to downgrade their product. Will rail travelers, who have chosen a long and leisurely mode of travel, be willing to cope with airline-type amenities, such as bare-minimum staff and microwave food? Why should they? If one is going to be treated like a number, one might as well take to the air and get it over with as quickly as possible!

As to our own personal travel over long-haul routes, such as Oakland to Chicago, we will choose air next time, unless Amtrak finds some way to improve the microwave food service. If enough potential Amtrak travelers take this position, the anti-Amtrak interests will then be able to say, "You see, the long-haul trains are unnecessary, just as we have been saying all along! Amtrak must be limited to short-haul corridors (if we must have Amtrak at all)."

We hope that Amtrak can find a way to maintain the high quality of their dining room service while staying within the guidelines Congress has now imposed. There must be other cost-effective alternatives to the food which, at this writing, our clients are saying is so objectionable. High-quality pre-cooked, microwave-heated meals are available, and have been used successfully in the first class cabins of many airlines. We have enjoyed such meals ourselves, and they are well-prepared, tasty, and are served on china and tablecloths, and eaten with silverware. If passengers are at least given the option of ordering a good meal (and many passengers would be willing to pay a substantial price for that privilege) then perhaps Amtrak will still have a product that is saleable to the long-haul passenger.

Many of our clients, accustomed to rapid air transportation, consider Amtrak, but waver when they learn that it will take them three days to cross the country. We have advised them that the trip consists of three well-prepared breakfasts, luncheS, cocktail hours, and dinners, with fresh flowers,

good service, and scenery included. This is often enough to close the sale for Amtrak. How can we now advise them that they must endure nine plastic-tray meals with plastic utensils, without losing the sale for Amtrak? How can we, in good conscience, allow them to spend their precious vacation hours and dollars on a cross-country train trip without warning them about the type of food they will be served? What a dilemma for the Amtrak-appointed travel agencies all over the country!

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS went on strike across the nation on Aug 3, with the immediate result that about half of all flights were cancelled, and many fewer travelers were flying, with many planes flying with less than capacity loads. Amtrak said that it was preparing for the strike period as it does with other peak load periods. However, Amtrak's capacity to increase its passenger loads is very limited, as many trains are already at capacity because of the summer travel season. The Wall Street Journal reported that Amtrak patronage was up 5% on the first day of the strike. Between Los Angeles and San Francisco the COAST STARLIGHT was already pretty much sold out, but the SAN JOAQUINS were available, and Amtrak's Arthur Lloyd said that the corporation was watching the situation closely and would expand the SAN JOAQUINS' regular 3-car consists to four or five cars as the situation warranted.....

LAST SUPERLINER CAR was being delivered to Amtrak in Chicago on July 30--the 284th car of the order. The average age of Amtrak's cars is now 3½ years, the rail corporation noted. In late August or early September, the first of the Budd low-level long distance coaches, destined for the Florida trains and other Eastern routes, is expected to roll off the assembly lines. Patterned after the Amfleet cars, these vehicles have larger windows and other alterations to make them more suitable for long-haul routes.....

SALE OF CONRAIL to private interests is regulated by the terms of the Dept. of Transportation budget worked out by House-Senate conferees on July 28. The rail corporation could only be sold as a unit before Oct 30, 1983. After that time, if it isn't sold in one piece, it could be sold bit by bit. Conferees agreed on a $262 million subsidy to Conrail in the coming fiscal year, but the Administration wants to get it into the hands of private enterprise as soon as possible.....

"AMTRAK'S TIJUANA HOLIDAY" is the title of a promotion running Aug 3-9 and sponsored by Amtrak, Caltrans and Lawry's Seasoning Mixes. Newspaper ads outline the terms of the promotion: buy a roundtrip Amtrak ticket to San Diego from L.A., Fullerton or Santa Ana, and get a free San Diego Trolley ticket to the Mexican border and a free sampler of Lawry's seasoning and sauce mixes. The offer was limited to the first 5,000 such ticket purchasers.....

THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR got new timetables effective Aug 1. The nationwide Amtrak timetable was not reissued, even tho the last version is labelled as effective from Apr 26 thru Aug 1.....

AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT has it that the COAST STARLIGHT will get the new airline style dining car food as of Aug 15.....

THE OVERNIGHT TRAIN between Sacramento and Los Angeles still has no definite startup date announced. An Amtrak spokesman said only that the train will start operation sometime before Oct 1. The date was to be announced at about the time that this issue of RTN is going to press. No name has been selected for the train yet. As noted earlier, this will be done in a contest; the contest will be announced by Caltrans at the time the train startup is given.....

THE PRAIRIE MARKSMAN began stopping at Eureka IL on Jul 22. The northbound stop is at 7am Mon-Sat and 8:30am on Sunday. Southbound, the train reaches Eureka at 8:20pm daily. The MARKSMAN, which began operation in Aug 1980, is on an experimental period which runs thru Aug 1981. Illinois officials wanted the Eureka stop to help increase train patronage, which must average 150 per day during the summer in order for the train to continue operation.....

WHEN THE ILLINI was extended to Decatur IL in July (see RTN #225), an inaugural train ran Chicago-Decatur (on July 1) carrying Amtrak president Alan Boyd, Illinois Congressman Ed Madigan, and other VIPs. The train was composed of one F40 locomotive, a 9610-series bi-level coach, a 9600-series bi-level coach lounge, and private car "Mount Rainier" (ex-Milwaukee Road business car). The train was to make 10-min whistle stops at Rantoul and Champaign. After a brief ceremony at Decatur, the train was put on display until about 8pm. The inaugural train was turned to run back as regular train 380 the next day, while train 381 of the 1st was deadheaded back to Chicago from Champaign. Train 380 leaves Decatur at 6am (except 8:15am on Sunday) and train 381 arrives Decatur at 9:45pm daily.....

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OHIO RAIL TRANSPORTATION Authority's Board in June voted to proceed with the engineering design for a high-speed passenger train test track between Ashtabula and a point north of Warren. This action came after the Ohio Supreme Court decided that ORTA had legal title to over $350,000 that the State Controlling Board tried to transfer away from it. The next step for ORTA, after the engineering design work, is to obtain title to USRA Line 714, trackage that has been abandoned some time ago, where the test track is to be constructed. In other ORTA news, that body is also investigating the possibility of "interim rail passenger service" for Ohio, until high-speed service can be accomplished. Such an interim service, linking major Ohio cities, could be operated directly by ORTA, thru contracts with freight railroads, or it could be part of the Amtrak state-supported service, ORTA said. In the past, Ohio authorities have said the state constitution prevents such cooperation with Amtrak. This claim will be examined under a new ORTA Board decision. Testifying before the Joint Economic Committee in Washington on Jul 23, ORTA Executive Director Robert J. Casey said that Congressman Henry S. Reuss' (D-Wisc.) proposal for federal encouragement of high-speed intercity trains is "the wave of the future in America." Reuss' proposal is known as the Rail Passenger System Act of 1981 (H.R. 4028). Casey said he enthusiastically endorses the proposal, but expressed concern that the proposed system would be under Amtrak jurisdiction. Casey said Amtrak has a "siege mentality" conditioned by 10 years of fighting to stay alive against the wishes of freight railroads, bus company lobbies, tax lobbies, and both Democratic and Republican secretaries of transportation. Casey said the program should be administered by a small commission, with the states, or groups of states, encouraged to form authorities to build the system.....

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THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of Railroad Passengers now offers a new incentive for membership in the passenger train supporting society. A travel magazine called "GETTING THERE by train, transit, boat & bus" will be published quarterly and distributed to all NARP members. The first (summer) issue highlights Cincinnati and how to get around there without autos. The 16-page, 8½x11 magazine is a how-to-do-it publication for those using public transportation. A trial membership in NARP is $10, renewing membership $15. NARP's address is 417 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington DC 20003.....

THE ANN RUTLEDGE is being detoured for about a month starting Jul 27 because of track work on the MoPac between Independence and Jefferson City MO. Stops at Warrensburg and Sedalia are missed, and Amtrak is running a van between those points Mon-Fri to accommodate passengers. The detour is not in effect on weekends. The train runs between Rock Creek Junction and Jefferson City via the River Subdivision on its detour.....

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD has lowered the passenger maximum speed limits on the Cheyenne to Ogden segment from 90mph to 79mph, effective May 31. Only a portion of the segment was 90mph. This reduction will not alter current schedules, but will reduce the potential for recovery of lost time.....

THIRTY-FOOT SINKHOLE opened up about 50 feet from the SCL Miami mainline, south of the Winter Haven FL station the night of Jul 21. An SCL freight conductor first reported it, and the next day the county filled it in with 35 truckloads of material.....

AMTRAK RAIL EXPRESS Package Service has been improved, the corporation announced Jul 29. Amtrak now offers volume incentive discounts to regular business customers; a new container service is being started, to increase handling efficiency, and all minimum charges have been removed to encourage rail shipment of small packages.....

THE ARKANSAS ASSOCIATION of RR Passengers points out that Amtrak, with its May ridership data, has changed its accounting methods to make long distance trains look less favorable. Next issue we'll have more, along with the ridership data...

CORRECTION: New number for Alma House (ad, p. 19) is: (303) 387-5336.....

News in this issue is updated thru August 5, 1981.

CARS & CONSISTS

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 48, Utica Jul 7: engines 341, 351; cars 1370, 1154, 1615, 2052, 2050, 2439 "Pacific Lodge", 2430 "Pacific Falls", 4606, 4619, 4602, 4649, 3110, 8503, 4612, 4604, 4607, 2442 "Cottonwood Grove", private car "Virginia Beach." Same, Hudson NY Jul 10: engines 491, 693; cars 1616, 2051, 2985 "Pine King", 2444 "Magnolia Grove", 4617, 4004, 4002, 4636, 3100, 8504, 21126.

*CRESCENT, train 19, Newark NJ Jul 10: engine 965; cars 1232, 1624, 4732, 4726, 4625, 4631, 4733, 4711, 4725, 3119, 8518, 2923 "Pacific Park", 2917 "Pacific Island", 2894, 20017, 21062, 21218.

*BLUE RIDGE, train 702, Rockville MD Jul 16: engine 330; cars 21059, 21000, 21015, 21150, 21092, 21042, 21088, 21112.

*KANSAS CITY MULE, train 341, Kansas City Jul 12: engine 318; cars 21223, 21155, 20126, business car MoPac #2 (St. Louis-Kansas City).

RAIL FANTRIPS

Aug 23: Farewell to the PCCs. Excursion on San Francisco Muni on last day of operation of PCC cars, 1-4pm. Incl historic cars 1006 & 1040. $15. BAERA c/o Neil Lang, 811 York St #201, Oakland CA 94610. (415) 444-4714 8-10pm.

Oct 3: Fall swap meet & annual meeting, incl rides on vintage rail equip't, movies, walking tours. Orange Empire Railway Museum, 2201 A Street, Perris, Calif. $3 adults. Exhibitors info from (714) 657-2605 weekends.

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to:
RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., has packaged a compromise that will keep Amtrak rolling for three years. That's 36 months in which Americans either will ride the passenger trains or lose them."

--Oregon Journal (Portland) editorial, Jun 16.

(It's hard to ride them when they're sold out.)

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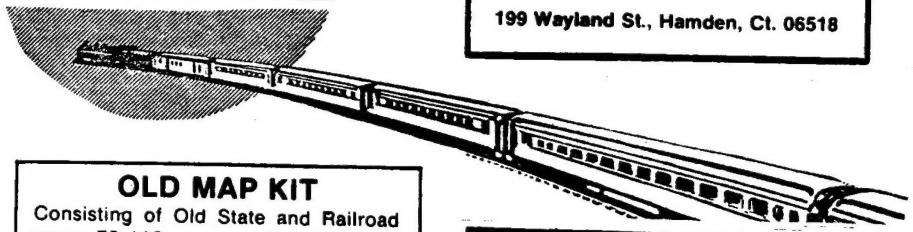

OLD MAP KIT
Consisting of Old State and Railroad maps 70-110 years old. All States. Some old County maps. Stamp for catalog.
The Northern Map Co.
Dept. RT Dunnellon, FL 32630.

MOVING?
Be sure to notify RTN of your new address as soon as possible. Don't rely on the Postal Service to forward your mail!

BACK ISSUES RTN is now offering our Tenth Anniversary Year volume, all the issues of 1980--18 issues sent all in one parcel at the price of $8 postpaid. Other back issues are also available and will be listed in upcoming issues, or write for information. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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